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OCI No. 1497/66

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
31 May 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 9:00 A.M. EDT)

Saigon

1. The violent Buddhist agitation against the Ky regime subsided during the daylight hours of 31 May in Saigon. There are conflicting indications, however, as to how long the lull will last and as to whether the Buddhist leaders are deliberately trying to take some of the heat out of the situation.

2. A 31 May communique in the name of the Unified Buddhist Church was read by Tri Quang over the Hue radio. The communique called for the faithful to "stop all the self-immolations." According to the press, the communique was also released by the Buddhist Institute leaders in Saigon. The US embassy in Saigon, however, has learned [redacted]

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[redacted] that the Institute has eight Buddhists "ready" for self-immolation and plans to burn them at the rate of 1 a day starting on 31 May. The Buddhists assertedly plan "intensive" effort to obtain maximum foreign press coverage for the immolations. [redacted] also indicate that the Buddhists have lined up a number of volunteers who are prepared to put themselves to the torch.

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3. The only violence reported during the day on 31 May in Saigon occurred at Saigon University where pro-government students attempted to attack a group of anti-government students who were holding a rally. Police broke up the ensuing scuffle.

State Department review completed

ARMY review(s) completed.

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Hue

4. The rebel power center was also calm during the daylight hours on the 31st. The strike called by the dissidents against the Americans remaining in the city took effect. Only a handful of Vietnamese employed at the MACV compound in Hue reported for work in the morning. By noon, when the strike was scheduled to end, about 30 percent of the Vietnamese work force was present.

5. There are no reports on the result of the Khoa ultimatum issued on 30 May to the struggle leaders in Hue. The province chief called on the rebels to turn in their arms and return the local radio station to provincial control. Violent demonstrations against the Saigon government were also ordered stopped. Khoa said that if his demands were not met he would stop all administrative functions in the city and would not be responsible for what might happen in Hue. The ultimatum expires at 10 P.M. Vietnam time on 31 May (10 A.M. EDT 31 May).

6. Elsewhere this morning there is evidence that the Ky regime has moved to implement its 19 May order to Buddhist chaplains to confine their activities to religion and avoid political agitation in the armed forces. The Buddhist chaplain in the 10th ARVN Division (headquartered in Long Khanh Province) has been relieved because of leaflets he issued on 24 May calling on Buddhist soldiers to "smash" the Ky regime. According to the Vietnamese press, the Buddhist chaplain of the 22nd ARVN tactical zone in Qui Nhon also has been ousted for political activities.

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